

**Focus Area B, Epidemiology and Surveillance Workgroup,  
Animal Surveillance and Education Subgroup  
February 16, 2005 – 2:00 p.m.  
Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine  
Bernice Barbour Wildlife Medicine Building  
Wood Conference Room**

**Attendees:** Erica Berl, MA Department of Public Health (MDPH); Fredric Cantor (MDPH); Daniel Church (MDPH); Lina deMontigny, Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine (TUSVM); Julie Dinnage, MA Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA); Cheryl Gauthier (MDPH); Jack Hawkes (TUSVM); Charlie Kaniecki (MDPH); James Knight, MA Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA); Janet Martin (TUSVM); Hayley Murphy, Zoo New England (ZNE); Kerry O'Brien (MDPH); Lorraine O'Connor, MA Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR); George Saperstein (TUSVM); Claudia Sarti (MDPH); **Guest:** Stanley Robertson, Mississippi State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

1) **Introductions**

Meeting opened by Fredric Cantor. Attendees introduced themselves. Dr. Robertson from the Mississippi State University, College of Veterinary Medicine was introduced as a guest.

2) **Minutes**

Minutes from meeting January 12, 2005 accepted with spelling corrections.

3) **MDPH-CDC Cooperative Agreement Update**

- a) CDC BT Conference February 22-25. Several MDPH abstracts accepted.
- b) Presentation by Fredric Cantor of abstract to be presented at CDC BT Conference by Pat Kludt, "Developing a Statewide Zoonotic Disease Surveillance System: the Massachusetts Approach" (20 minute presentation).

4) **Tufts—Zoonotic Disease Protocol Development Project**

- a) Report (handout) by Lina deMontigny on her progress in developing a high priority zoonotic disease list compiling 3 different lists. Also progress on veterinary questionnaire to assess specimen collection knowledge, BT agent knowledge, and laboratory use among MA veterinarians. Finally, there was a discussion of progress in developing case definitions.
- b) Discussion on questionnaire:
  - 1) Lina would like to have an incentive for veterinarians to fill out questionnaire, i.e. CE credits, raffle?
  - 2) Jim Knight said questionnaire can easily go on MVMA website.
  - 3) Lack of standardization of terms.
  - 4) Charlie Kaniecki suggested adding a question to section 19, "Do you know how to decontaminate your facility".
  - 5) Jim Knight suggested adding reporting protocols to questionnaire (AVMA article on importance of reporting disease).
  - 6) George Saperstein suggested adding a question concerning best methods of contacting veterinary practices, "Do you have access to fax, e-mail, etc."
  - 7) Want to survey as many veterinarians in the state as possible? How to exclude veterinarians who do not practice in the state? Use AVMA listing?
  - 8) Plan to send a preliminary letter first describing the intent, followed by the survey.
  - 9) Feedback on the questionnaire is due back to Lina by March 9.

- c) Discussion on case definitions: Lina stated that there is little information on case definitions. Florida is the only state that has any case definitions for zoonotic disease. CDC has surveillance case definitions for humans. Haley Murphy suggested investigating the USDA.
- d) Lina is starting to develop resource files of key documents on diseases and public health response.

#### 5) **MDAR Program Update**

- a) Lorraine O'Connor reported that interviews are being conducted to replace the veterinary epidemiologist. A contract person has been hired for database input using grant funds.
- b) Lorraine stated that disease symptom reporting is inadequate in general. Veterinarians in the state are not notifying her. Would like to improve practitioners' awareness of the best practice for reporting. She would also like suspect cases reported so that she can work with the practitioners on proper diagnostics etc.
- c) George Saperstein suggested sending a disease fact sheet to practitioners who report to Lorraine so they can pass that information along to their clients.
- d) Need to get feedback to practitioners after they report. George also suggested compiling a state map of disease occurrence and update it monthly.
- e) Acknowledged fact that MDAR does not know the number of veterinarians or vet clinics in the state or how to contact them efficiently. A quick way to contact practices is needed. Suggestion that drug distributors probably have lists of practices and perhaps cross checking with the AVMA directory would be helpful.
- f) Charlie Kaniecki is trying to get a list of animal control officers, through town/city health departments, in Western Massachusetts.

#### 6) **Tufts Wildlife Disease Surveillance Project Update**

Report by Janet Martin on Tufts Wildlife Disease Surveillance Project (handout).

- a) Definitions of standard operating procedure categories—get comments to Janet and Alison. The next step is to develop SOP's that fall within the 7 categories listed on the flow chart.
- b) Primary area of focus was on the category of Sample Collection. Developing the flow of samples into the TUSVM Wildlife Clinic. Including intake forms for live and dead animals, checklist for processing samples etc.
- c) Chain of custody was discussed, including if this was an area in need of protocol development, where does this type of process start i.e. in the field, in the laboratory, while suspect case or only after confirmation, etc.
- d) Development of criteria for determining if case is a BT case or not. Will develop checklist of criteria that will be applied at several specific points in the process. At each point samples will either move forward as a BT suspect or not.
- e) Specific protocols will vary from disease to disease. This is why the SOP categories need to be fleshed out so that each of the 4 diseases and syndromes can be taken through each step and the specific SOP's developed that apply.
- f) Meetings: Continuing to gather information relevant to the SOP's from web sources and meetings. Met with MDAR, USDA Veterinary and Wildlife Services, members of the LBOH in Westborough. Met with Dr Robertson of Mississippi to discuss database development. Weekly meetings of the TUVSM project staff.
- g) Equipment purchases are moving forward. The ultracold freezer for archiving specimens has arrived and will be set up. The hood is ready to be installed. Supplies for initial sampling and archiving of samples have been ordered.

#### 7) **Next Meeting**

- a) Wednesday, March 9, 2:00-4:00 p.m., Bernice Barbour Wildlife Medicine Building Conference Room.

Minutes submitted by Carolyn Corsiglia, Tufts University

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